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STAFF AND AGENT AIDS PANEL

Synopsis

1. The prime technical objective of the Agency's Staff and Agent Aids Program is to provide "technological support to operations directly involving agents and/or staff officers." In general the program is hardware oriented and support is provided in terms of equipment. Advanced RD&E is undertaken as required in order to provide components and techniques. The program includes the following: (a) the TSD Staff and Agent Aids Program (short range agent commo, non-official cover commo, disguise and denied area operations); (b) Audio Operations; (c) Surreptitious Entry; and (d) Installation Aids. Current capability to support present types of operations is "in reasonably good shape."

2. Inventories of current RD&E programs, and on shelf equipment, are presented for OC, ORD and TSD. TSD has by far the largest share of the Agency program. The Panel notes that even though most of the hardware is relatively unsophisticated it is expensive to develop and produce. Regarding future developments and needs, the Panel anticipates increased emphasis in international police support, denied area operations and collection of economic intelligence.

Problem Areas

3. Although the Agency has reasonably adequate staff and agent aids in terms of 1972 requirements and it is estimated that gaps in coverage can be

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eliminated or reduced by the present level of the D&E program effort, "funding appears to have fallen to a marginally low level for efficient operation." New classes of surveillance equipment will likely be needed to meet future requirements; thus, an expanded level of RD&E effort is anticipated. However, the TSD RD&E budget (chief source of new SAA equipment to present) "has become barely adequate to maintain the minimum level referred to above." This shortcoming is attributed to successive budget cuts and the continued increase in RD&E costs and effects of inflation. "Virtually all slack that would permit development of new and innovative systems or taking advantage of new technologies has been eliminated."

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5. It is the opinion of the Panel that at the present time there apparently is no "significant undesirable duplication of effort" indicated in the inventory of major products.

6. Several non-technical limitations are said to influence program effectiveness: (a) over-estimation of potential and consequent over-classification and restriction of a technique; (b) tendency to reinvent same thing repeatedly under new descriptions; (c) tendency to undertake large scale efforts without a critical assessment of underlying physical principles and validity of approach and a critical analysis of the tradeoff between project costs and operational return (the Panel should be asked what constructive steps are being taken to rectify this situation).

Recommendation

7. Without actually labeling them Panel recommendations, the report lists 25 projects which "could be undertaken to advantage." Any or all would provide improved capability over what the Agency has today. The projects are within current technology and contractual resources are available and adequate; limitations are strictly budgetary. The projects are wide in scope and would result not only in generally improved capabilities but also improvements geared toward the anticipated new future requirements.

8. Several recommendations are made by the Chairman: investigate some practical method for Agency-wide storage and retrieval of technical data which

would help to eliminate duplication of R&D efforts (access to information independent of prior knowledge of contract numbers, fiscal years and other such administrative information); close liaison between OC and TSD to prevent unnecessary duplication of effort on SRAC work; close liaison between ORD and TSD to avoid duplication in laser work; consideration of the ideas presented in the TSD MPS planning paper for their impact on future RD&E efforts in the Agency.

9. The report does a commendable job of giving the status of the various staff and agent aids programs presently underway in different components of the Agency. However, it fails to recommend what the Panel members believe should be an over-all Agency program, both with regard to technological aspects, priorities, and required finances over a span of a few years. This should still be done by the Panel. A good starting point for this would be to assign priorities to the 25 projects which "could be undertaken to advantage," recommend potential contractors and suggested project costs (together with responsible Agency component) and define a program for the next two to three years.

10. As a general comment, it is suggested that recommendations should come from the Panel rather than from just the Chairman.

Agent and Staff Aids

Again, a Panel notes lack of long range Agency goals as a critical inhibitor to the development and evaluation of technical programs, ~~in this area~~. In this case, guidance is needed on the extent to which the Agency may be involved in support of international police, development of economic intelligence, counter terrorist activities, and drug traffic.

Although not strongly emphasized by the Panel, a variety of developments complicate the agent and staff problems, e.g., unavailability of official cover, increasing sophistication on the part of the opposition, etc.

The technical problems in this area are generally imposed by mother nature. The requirements for a miniaturized, efficient antenna, for example, is internally inconsistent, and trade-offs must be accepted. As in the case with non-access audio collection, operational ingenuity or invention, and use of non-conventional (perhaps non-electronic) systems are more likely to provide solutions to some of these problems than simply working harder on the current approaches.

It is the opinion of the Panel that the funding for this area ^{is} ~~was~~ about adequate. Whether or not the funding remains adequate will ~~be dependent~~ upon the number of agents who may need technical help, and changes in the environment in which they operate. The areas proposed for supplemental funding

reflect primarily anticipated responsibility in some new areas, such as international police operations, etc., or incremental improvement in existing devices, such as faster and quieter excavating tools, smaller and more sensitive pinhole microphones, etc. Of particular interest, however, is a proposition for using either local embassies or Headquarters as the listening post for surveillance installations--a particular application which should be considered in the development of any command-and control-communications system.